

MICCO

A Seminole Indian Boy



ROGER
VERNAM

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MICCO—A SEMINOLE INDIAN BOY

Micco was a Seminole Indian boy. He lived on an island in the Everglades of Florida. All around the island were miles and miles of swamps.

Micco never saw a mountain and would not have felt at home anywhere else but in the Everglades.

In some places the water was very shallow. These shallows were often filled with sawgrass. This is a tall, strong grass with sharp edges like the teeth of a saw. Where the sawgrass grew, it looked as though there was dry ground underneath. But Micco knew that if he stepped into it, he would sink into water and mud.

In other places the water formed deep lakes. In the deep



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spots Micco's father could paddle his canoe. In the shallow water, he pushed it ahead with a pole.

His canoe was a dugout. He made it from the trunk of a cypress tree. The cypress is a tall tree, that grows on



the islands of the Everglades. The wood is very hard.

After he had cut down the tree trunk, Micco's father chopped a little hollow along the top. Then he built fires in the hollow. When the fires had burned out, he scraped away the charred wood. So he burned the hollow larger and larger, until his canoe was finished.

When Micco was only four, he began to help his father and mother with their work. He did not go to school, but his parents and grandparents taught him everything that a Seminole should know.

He learned to carry water from a spring to the wigwam where he lived. At first his mother gave him a little gourd to use as a pail. As he grew taller and stronger, she gave him larger ones, so he could carry more water at a time.



Micco's father was a great hunter. There was always plenty of meat in the wigwam. There were other good things to eat, also. Wild fruits and nuts grew on the islands of the Everglades. When Micco wanted an orange, his father picked one from a tree.

Micco's mother had a nice garden. In it she raised corn and sweet potatoes. She ground the corn into meal. From the meal she made bread. Back of the garden was a patch of sugar cane. His mother sometimes gave him a slice of sugar cane to suck. It tasted as good as your lollipops do.

Did you ever see a squash vine growing up a tree? There was a climbing squash in Micco's garden. It crept right up among the branches. The squashes looked as though they were growing on the tree, instead of on a vine.



When Micco's mother wanted to cook a squash, Micco's father picked up his bow and an arrow. He shot the arrow straight through the stem of one of the squashes. The squash fell with a loud "Plop!" Then Micco ran to pick



it up. The squashes often broke when they touched the ground. Then Micco's mother did not even have to cut them open.

Micco's home was a wigwam. It looked a good deal like



the summer houses you sometimes see in gardens. It had a framework of poles. The floor was not placed on the ground. It was high enough for a dog or a baby to walk under and was made by fastening a floor of split poles to the framework and covering it with mats of woven reeds and grasses.

The sides of the wigwam were covered with deerskins to keep out the rain. During hot weather these were rolled up from the bottom like awnings. The roof was made of leaves which were tied to the framework and held fast at the top by heavy poles. They were very large leaves from the palmetto tree. Palm leaf fans are made from these leaves. They made a cool roof for the wigwam. The hot rays of the sun could not get through them. The heavy



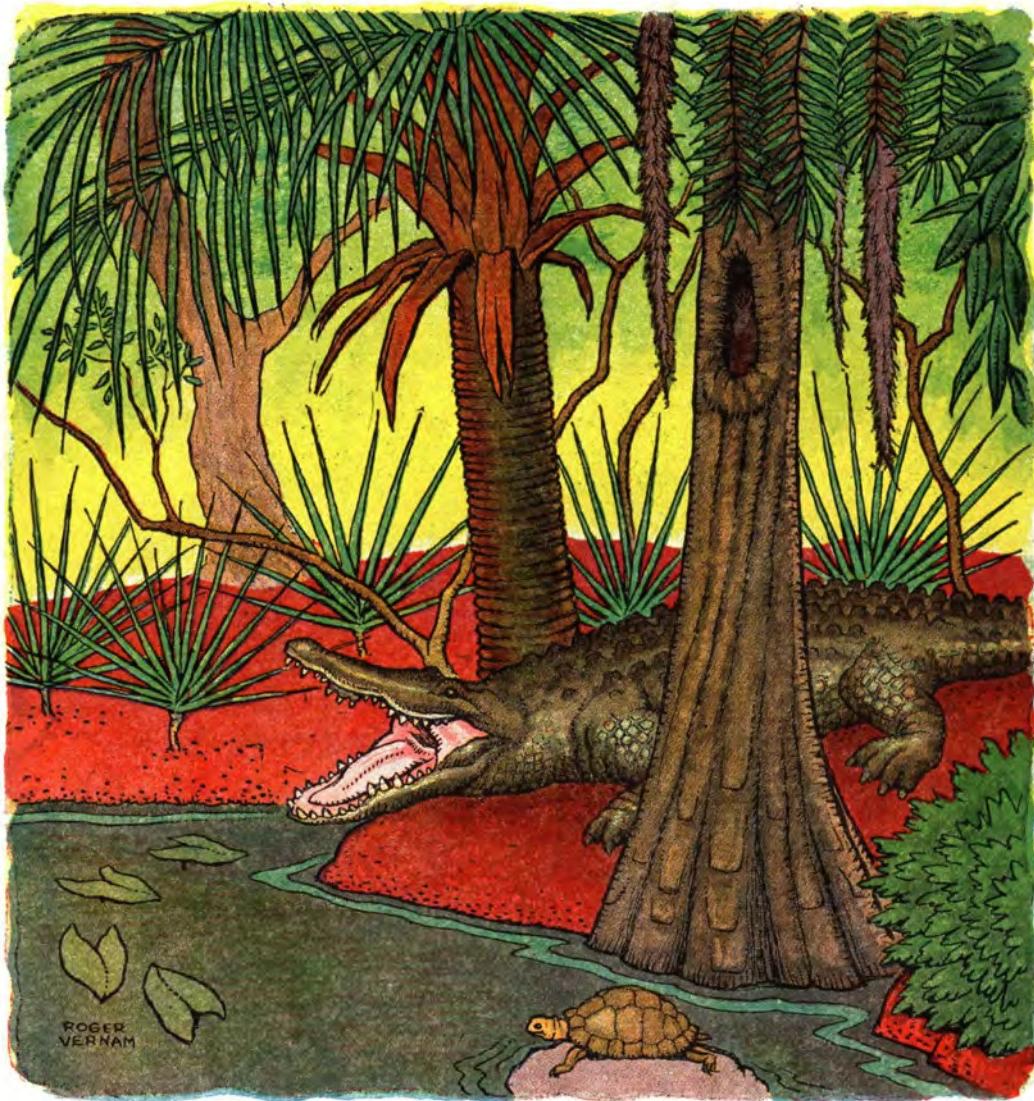
rains ran right off this roof, too. So Micco's home was cool and dry, no matter how hot or how wet the weather might be.

All over the island tall trees grew. Some of them had veils of gray moss hanging from the branches. These were live oaks. When Micco climbed into a live oak tree, he was hidden by the moss from anyone who was standing on the ground.

The Everglades were full of interesting things. Some of them were lovely to see. Some of them were dangerous.

His father showed him alligators and water snakes when they were going through the swamps in their dug-out canoe.

The alligators looked like rough logs lying on the water.

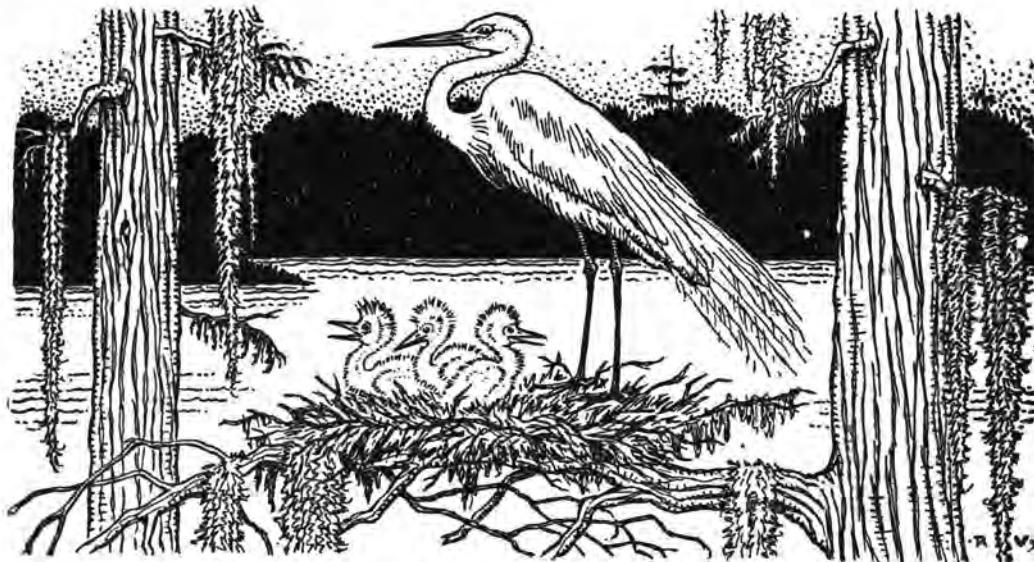


But when they opened their great jaws, Micco could see rows of strong, sharp teeth. He knew he must learn to defend himself against alligators, when he was old enough to be a hunter.

There were many wonderful things to see, in this Everglade country. Beautiful birds of all colors. Micco liked to watch the white herons scooping up little fish in their big bills. He knew they were getting food for the hungry little herons, which were waiting in mud nests in the trees. The loveliest birds of all were the pink flamingoes, which stood on one leg in the swamps.

Often Micco heard wild turkeys "gobbling" in the trees. He learned to "gobble" too. Sometimes the turkeys thought he was another turkey, calling to them. Then they called back to him.

Micco was never lonely, even when he went into the woods alone. He liked to watch the birds and animals and insects. Sometimes he made friends with them. He knew he must learn all about these woodland creatures, to become a good hunter in the Seminole tribe.





MICCO

“What pretty birds” young Micco thinks
As he sees them flying high.

Their feathers are a dainty pink
Against the blue, blue sky.

“I’d like to jump upon one’s back
And float right thru the air

I know it would be lots of fun
But—guess I wouldn’t dare.”